DEPARTMENT OF STATE REVENUE
LETTER OF FINDINGS: 02-0489
Indiana Individual Income Tax
For the Tax Year 2001

NOTICE: Under IC 4-22-7-7, this document is required to be published in the Indiana register and is effective on its date of publication. It shall remain in effect until the date it is superseded or deleted by the publication of a new document in the Indiana Register. The publication of the document will provide the general public with information about the Department's official position concerning a specific issue.

ISSUES

I. Legislative Authority to Impose State Adjusted Gross Income Tax.

Authority: Ind. Const. art. I, § 25; Ind. Const. art. IV, § 1; Ind. Const. art. X, § 8; IC 6-3-1-3.5; Ind. Dept. of Envtl. Management v. Chemical Waste Management, Inc., 643 N.E.2d 331 (Ind. 1994); Campbell v. Heiss, 53 N.E.2d 634 (Ind. 1944); Bissell Carpet Sweeper Co. v. Shane Co., 143 N.E.2d 415 (Ind. 1957).

Taxpayer argues that the state legislature acted outside its constitutional authority in imposing the individual state adjusted gross income by reference to the federal Internal Revenue Code.

II. Voluntary Nature of the State's Adjusted Gross Income Tax.

Authority: IC 6-8.1-11-2; Couch v. United States, 409 U.S. 322 (1975); Helvering v. Mitchell, 303 U.S. 391 (1938); United States v. Gerads, 999 F.2d 1255 (9th Cir. 1993); McLaughlin v. United States, 832 F.2d 986 (7th Cir. 1987); McKeown v. Ott, No. H 84-169, 1985 WL 11176 at *2 (N.D. Ind. Oct. 30, 1985).

Taxpayer maintains that the payment of the state's individual adjusted gross income is voluntary. Therefore, taxpayer states that he no longer volunteers to pay the tax.

III. Imposition of the State's Adjusted Gross Income Tax on Wages.

Authority: U.S. Const. amend. XIV; I.R.C. § 61; I.R.C. § 871; I.R.C. § 911; New York v. Graves, 300 U.S. 308 (1937); Bowers v. Kerbaugh-Empire Co., 271 U.S. 170 (1926); Irwin v. Gavit, 268 U.S. 161 (1925); United States v. Supplee-Biddle Hardware Co., 265 U.S. 189 (1924); Goodrich v. Edwards, 255 U.S. 527 (1921); Merchant's Loan & Trust Co. v. Smietanka, 255 U.S. 509 (1921); Doyle v. Mitchell, 247 U.S. 179 (1918); Stratton's Independence, Ltd. V. Howbert, 231 U.S. 399 (1913); United States v. Connor, 898 F2d 942 (3rd Cir. 1990); Wilcox v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, 848 F2d 1007 (9th Cir. 1988); Coleman v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, 791 F2d 68 (7th Cir. 1986); United States v. Koliboski, 732 F2d 1328 (7th Cir. 1984); United States v. Ballard, 535 F.2d 400

(8th Cir. 1976); United States v. Romero, 640 F2d 1014 (9th Cir. 1981); Snyder v. Indiana Dept. of State Revenue, 723 N.E.2d 487 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2000); Thomas v. Indiana Dept. of State Revenue, 675 N.E.2d 362 (Ind. Tax. Ct. 1997); Richey v. Indiana Dept. of State Revenue, 634 N.E.2d 1375 (Ind. Tax Ct. 1994).

Taxpayer states the federal adjusted gross income tax may only be levied against corporate profits. Because the state's individual income tax is based upon the federal scheme and because, by definition, taxpayer did not receive "corporate profits," taxpayer is not subject to the state's income tax. In addition, taxpayer maintains that, under I.R.C. § 861, only income from foreign sources or income received by nonresident aliens is subject to federal income tax.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Taxpayer submitted Indiana income tax returns for the years 2000 and 2001. Those returns were filled in with "zeroes." The Department of Revenue (Department) disagreed with taxpayer's calculations, assessed an amount of unpaid taxes, and sent taxpayer notices to that effect. Taxpayer submitted a series of protests in which he disputed the Department's conclusions and demanded an opportunity to explain the basis for the protest. The Department, in a letter dated October 29, 2002, informed taxpayer that a protest of the 2000 assessment was untimely because it was submitted more than 60 days after the 2000 assessment was made; taxpayer does not challenge the Department's conclusion regarding that 2000 assessment. Nonetheless, taxpayer was given provided the opportunity to explain the basis of his protest of the 2001 assessment. This Letter of Findings results.

DISCUSSION

I. Legislative Authority to Impose State Adjusted Gross Income Tax.

Taxpayer argues that, "Nowhere in the Indiana Constitution did the people of this state give any power to the federal government to make laws exclusively for those living in Indiana." In effect, taxpayer argues that the Indiana Constitution does not permit references to another taxing jurisdiction's own laws and when faced with such an improper reference – such as that found within IC 6-3-1-3.5 – the taxpayer's compliance is not required.

Specifically, taxpayer cites to Ind. Const. art. I, § 25 which states that, "No law shall be passed, the taking effect of which shall be made to depend upon any authority, except as provided in this Constitution." This section of the state constitution is intended to place a limit on "the legislative activity of the General Assembly." Ind. Dept. of Envtl. Management v. Chemical Waste Management, Inc., 643 N.E.2d 331, 341 (Ind. 1994).

The Indiana Constitution vests all legislative authority in the Indiana General Assembly. "The Legislative authority of the State shall be vested in a General Assembly, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The style of every law shall be: 'Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Indiana': and no law shall be enacted, except by bill." Ind. Const. art. IV, § 1. Taxpayer is correct in his assertion that, under Ind. Const. art. I, § 25 and art.

IV, § 1, the Indiana General Assembly may not delegate either its authority or its responsibility for performing its exclusively legislative functions. “The power to legislate or to exercise a legislative function cannot be delegated to a non-governmental agency or person. Nor can the Legislature delegate its law-making power to a governmental officer, board, bureau or commission.” Bissell Carpet Sweeper Co. v. Shane Co., 143 N.E.2d 415, 419 (Ind. 1957) (Internal citations omitted).

On its face, taxpayer’s contention appears to have merit. The Indiana General Assembly may not delegate its responsibility for defining the state’s adjusted gross income tax scheme to the federal government. Neither may the Assembly’s authority to implement such a scheme be obtained under federal law. However, the cross-references to the Internal Revenue Code – such as I.R.C. § 62 cited within IC 6-3-1-3.5 – do not delegate the Assembly’s taxing authority. The state legislature did not turn over its taxing authority to the federal government. The state legislature did not obtain its taxing authority from the federal government. Ind. Const. art. X, § 8 unambiguously states that, “The general assembly may levy and collect a tax upon income from whatever source derived . . . .” The Indiana Code provisions reflect merely the legislature’s independent decision to employ the federal calculation as the starting point for determining Indiana’s adjusted gross income tax. “It is well settled that a legislative body may enact a law, the operation of which depends upon the existence of a stipulated condition.” Campbell v. Heiss, 53 N.E.2d 634, 636 (Ind. 1944). The state legislature has retained its independent authority to define and enforce the state’s own income tax plan. That the Indiana General Assembly has retained exclusive authority to stake out the parameters of the state’s adjusted gross income tax scheme, is evidenced by the Assembly’s decisions to periodically reenact IC 6-3-1-3.5 the latest of which occurred in 2001. Whether the General Assembly should have avoided internal references to the Internal Revenue Code by independently drafting original statutory provisions mirroring the Internal Revenue Code and then require every Indiana taxpayer to recalculate his taxable income, is an issue beyond the scope of this Letter of Findings and irrelevant to determining taxpayer’s tax liability. Suffice it to say that the General Assembly acted entirely within its authority in employing the federal adjusted gross income as the jumping off point for calculating the individual taxpayer’s Indiana adjusted gross income.

FINDING

Taxpayer’s protest is denied.

II. Voluntary Nature of the State’s Adjusted Gross Income Tax.

Taxpayer argues that payment of Indiana individual income tax is voluntary and that he no longer volunteers to pay the tax. Taxpayer cites to IC 6-8.1-11-2 which states as follows:

> The general assembly makes the following findings: (3) The Indiana tax system is based largely on *voluntary compliance*. (4) The development of understandable tax laws and the education of taxpayers concerning the tax laws will improve *voluntary compliance* and the relationship between the state and taxpayers. (*Emphasis added*).

Taxpayer's argument is without merit. In describing the nature of the federal tax system, the Court has stated that, "In assessing income taxes the Government relies primarily upon the disclosure by the taxpayer of the relevant facts. This disclosure it requires him to make in his annual return. To ensure full and honest disclosure, to discourage fraudulent attempts to evade the tax, Congress imposes sanctions. Such sanctions may confessedly be either criminal or civil." Helvering v. Mitchell, 303 U.S. 391, 399 (1938).

Taxpayer's basic contention – that Indiana depends on its citizens' voluntary compliance with the tax laws – is undeniable. Indeed, the state also depends on its licensed drivers to drive on the right side of the road. However, that does not mean that failure to comply with the law is without predictable consequences. "Any assertion that the payment of income taxes is voluntary is without merit. It is without question that the payment of income taxes is not voluntary." United States v. Gerads, 999 F.2d 1255, 1256 (9th Cir. 1993). "The notion that the federal income tax is contractual or otherwise consensual in nature is not only utterly without foundation, but despite [appellant's] protestation to the contrary, has been repeatedly rejected by the courts." McLaughlin v. United States, 832 F.2d 986, 987 (7th Cir. 1987). "[A]rguments about who is a 'person' under the tax laws, the assertion that 'wages are not income', and maintaining that *payment of taxes is a purely voluntary function do not comport with common sense - let alone the law*." McKeown v. Ott, No. H 84-169, 1985 WL 11176 at *2 (N.D. Ind. Oct. 30, 1985) (Emphasis Added). Such arguments "have been clearly and repeatedly rejected by this and every other court to review them." Id. at *1.

The Supreme Court has stated that the government's entire tax systems is "largely dependent upon honest self-reporting." Couch v. United States, 409 U.S. 322, 335 (1975). Taxpayer's bare assertion, that, based on the precatory language contained within IC 6-8.1-11-2, he no longer "volunteers" to pay income taxes and that it is sufficient to fill in his tax returns with numerous "zeroes," does not fall within a reasonable definition of "honest self-reporting."

FINDING

Taxpayer's protest is denied.

III. Imposition of the State's Adjusted Gross Income Tax on Wages.

Taxpayer sets out a number of arguments concerning the relevance and applicability of the income tax laws. Taxpayer maintains that the only corporate profits are subject to income tax. In addition, taxpayer maintains that only income received from foreign sources or income received by nonresident aliens is subject to federal income tax.

A. Corporate Profits.

Taxpayer maintains that the Department erred when it decided that taxpayer owed income tax. According to taxpayer, only corporate profits are subject to income tax and that – as a private individual – he did not receive any compensation which was subject to the federal or state's income tax scheme.

In support of that proposition, taxpayer cites to a number of Supreme Court cases including Doyle v. Mitchell, 247 U.S. 179 (1918); Merchant's Loan & Trust Co. v. Smietanka, 255 U.S. 509 (1921); and a federal circuit court case, United States v. Ballard, 535 F.2d 400 (8th Cir. 1976).

In Doyle, the Court stated that "Whatever difficulty there may be about a precise and scientific definition of 'income' it imports . . . the idea of gain or increase arising from corporate activities." Doyle at 185. In Smietanka, the Court stated that, "There can be no doubt that the word [income] must be given the same meaning and content in the Income Tax Acts of 1916 and 1917 that it had in the Act of 1913." Smietanka at 519. Similarly, the same Court stated, "there would seem to be no room to doubt that the word must be given the same meaning in all of the Income Tax Acts of Congress that was given to it in the Corporation Excise Tax Act and that what that meaning is has now become definitely settled by decisions of this court." Id. Taxpayer reads these and the cited companion cases as supporting the proposition that the federal income tax – and by extension Indiana's adjusted gross income tax – can only be levied against corporate gain. According to taxpayer, the cases inevitably lead to the conclusion that "income" – as referred to within both the federal and companion state statutes – is exclusively limited to that definition as established under the Civil War Income Tax Act of 1867; the Corporation Excise Tax Act of 1909; and the Income Tax Acts of 1913, 1916, and 1917.

However, the cited cases do not permit such a conclusion. In the cases cited by taxpayer, the Court was asked to determine the definition of corporate income. In Doyle, the Supreme Court was asked to resolve the issue of whether the increase in value of the corporate taxpayer's standing timber constituted "income." In determining that the increase in value did not constitute corporate "income," the Court stated that the definition of corporate income had remained unchanged during the intervening recodifications of the federal corporate income tax and the ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. In Smietanka – resolving the issue of whether a provision in a will, stipulating that accretions in the value of testamentary property should be considered additions to principal and not income – the court similarly noted that the definition of "income" had remained unchanged. The Court went on to state that. "In general, income is the gain derived from capital, from labor, or from both combined, provided it be understood to include profit gained through a sale or conversion of capital assets. . . ." Smietanka at 519.

The cited cases support the proposition that corporate gain is subject to the existing federal corporate income tax scheme. The cited cases are useful in determining whether income from the sale of mining stock is subject to corporate income tax, Goodrich v. Edwards, 255 U.S. 527 (1921), whether dividends paid on loans to German banks during World War I are subject to corporate income tax, Bowers v. Kerbaugh-Empire Co., 271 U.S. 170 (1926), whether life insurance proceeds paid to corporate beneficiaries are subject to corporate income tax, United States v. Supplee-Biddle Hardware Co., 265 U.S. 189 (1924), and whether income received from a will and designated for a granddaughter's education was subject to income tax. Irwin v. Gavit, 268 U.S. 161 (1925). The cited cases do nothing to support the assertion that *only* corporate gain is subject to the tax. Simply stated, if the courts are asked to define "corporate income," the courts will arrive at a conclusion which defines "corporate income."

In United States v. Ballard, 535 F.2d 400 (8th Cir. 1976), the court stated, in determining appellant taxpayer's individual income tax liability, that, "The general term "income" is not defined in the Internal Revenue Code." Id. at 404. Rather, the court noted that the Internal Revenue Code operates under and employs the term "gross income." Id. However, nothing in Ballard can be read to support the proposition that the federal adjusted gross income tax is only applicable to corporate gain or that individual taxpayer's wages are not subject to imposition of the federal adjusted gross income tax. To the contrary, the court found that appellant taxpayer was liable for additional income taxes on wages received from his business. Id. at 405.

The question of what constitutes individual taxable "income" has been answered by the courts. Although not binding upon Indiana's decision to tax the wages of its own citizens, the United States Supreme Court has definitively ruled on the question of whether a citizen's individual income may be subjected to an adjusted gross income tax. In New York v. Graves, 300 U.S. 308, 312-13 (1937), Justice Stone stated as follows:

> That the receipt of income by a resident of the territory of a taxing sovereignty is a taxable event is universally recognized. Domicil itself affords a basis for such taxation. Enjoyment of the privileges of residence in the state and the attendant right to invoke the protection of its laws are inseparable from the responsibility for sharing the costs of government . . . . A tax measured by the net income of residents is an equitable method of distributing the burdens of government among those who are privileged to enjoy its benefits. The tax, which is apportioned to the ability of the taxpayer to pay it, is founded upon the protection afforded by the state to the recipient of the income in his person, in his right to receive the income and in his enjoyment of it when received. These are rights and privileges which attach to domicil within the state. To them and to the equitable distribution of the tax burden, the economic advantage realized by the receipt of income and represented by the power to control it, bears a direct relationship. *Neither the privilege nor the burden is affected by the character of the source from which the income is derived.* (*Emphasis added*).

Since that 1937 decision, the federal courts have consistently, repeatedly, and without exception determined that individual wages – no matter in what form the taxpayers have attempted to characterize, define, or label those wages – are income subject to taxation. United States v. Connor, 898 F2d 942. 943 (3rd Cir. 1990) ("Every court which has ever considered the issue has unequivocally rejected the argument that wages are not income"); Wilcox v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, 848 F2d 1007, 1008 (9th Cir. 1988) ("First, wages are income."); Coleman v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue, 791 F2d 68, 70 (7th Cir. 1986) ("Wages are income, and the tax on wages is constitutional."); United States v. Koliboski, 732 F2d 1328, 1329 n. 1 (7th Cir. 1984) ("Let us now put [the question] to rest: WAGES ARE INCOME. Any reading of tax cases by would-be tax protesters now should preclude a claim of good-faith belief that wages – or salaries – are not taxable.") (Emphasis in original).

In addressing the identical question, the Indiana Tax Court has held that, "Common definition, an overwhelming body of case law by the United Sates Supreme Court and federal circuit courts, and this Court's opinion . . . all support the conclusion that wages are income for purposes of Indiana's adjusted gross income tax." Snyder v. Indiana Dept. of State Revenue, 723 N.E.2d 487, 491 (Ind. Tax Ct. 2000). *See also* Thomas v. Indiana Dept. of State Revenue, 675 N.E.2d 362 (Ind. Tax Ct. 1997); Richey v. Indiana Dept. of State Revenue, 634 N.E.2d 1375 (Ind. Tax Ct. 1994).

B. Wages and Earnings of Private Citizens.

Nevertheless, taxpayer maintains that even if he did receive taxable "income," because he is a private citizen and a resident this country, he is not subject to the tax. According to taxpayer, only income received from foreign sources or income received by nonresident aliens is subject to federal income tax.

Taxpayer maintains that I.R.C. § 61 does not include "wages" or "salaries." The cited federal code section reads as follows:

> Except as otherwise provided in this subtitle, gross income means all income from whatever source derived, including (but not limited to) the following items:
>
> > (1) Compensation for services, including fees, commissions, fringe benefits, and similar items;
> > (2) Gross income derived from business;
> > (3) Gains derived from dealings in property;
> > (4) Interest;
> > (5) Rents;
> > (6) Royalties;
> > (7) Dividends;
> > (8) Alimony and separate maintenance payments;
> > (9) Annuities;
> > (10) Income from life insurance and endowment contracts;
> > (11) Pensions;
> > (12) Income from discharge of indebtedness;
> > (13) Distributive share of partnership gross income;
> > (14) Income in respect of a decedent; and
> > (15) Income from an interest in an estate or trust.

Thereafter, taxpayer cites to I.R.C. § 871, 911 which discuss the taxability of, inter alia, the "wages, and salaries" received by "Non-resident aliens and foreign corporations." Taxpayer reads I.R.C. §§ 61, 911, and 871 together and reaches the following conclusion: I.R.C. § 61, which defines "gross income" – from which "taxable income" for both federal and state purposes is calculated – does not include the terms "wages" or salaries." I.R.C. §§ 871, 911 – setting out the responsibility for non-resident aliens, Americans living abroad, and foreign corporations to pay income tax – *does* specifically refer to both "wages" and "salaries." Therefore, I.R.C. § 61, by not specifically referencing "wages" and "salaries," excludes the wages and salaries of the average American from income tax.

Taxpayer's conclusion – that "gross income" excludes "wages" or "salaries" – does not withstand close scrutiny. It is not uncommon for statutes to omit fundamental definitions of legal concepts or for tax statutes to omit fundamental definitions of what is being taxed. One will search the Indiana property tax statutes in vain for a definition of "land" but it is undisputed that Indiana jurisdictions levy a tax against real property. Although the Constitution does not define the words, there is no contention that "due process" is not a fundamental right guaranteed under the federal constitution and that a citizen's rights to "due process" is protected under U.S. Const. amend. XIV which states that no state shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; or deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Indeed, taxpayer himself stated that a denial of his right to a hearing and an opportunity to explain the basis for his protest would be a violation of the Due Process Clause of both the federal and state constitutions.

I.R.C. § 61 states that "gross income" includes "all income from whatever source derived." The citation itself specifically refers to "[c]ompensation for services." There is not a single court decision which has ever concluded that the average citizen's wages are not subject to either federal or state income tax. "Compensation for labor or services, paid in the form of wages or salary, has been universally, held by the courts of this republic to be income, subject to the income tax laws currently applicable." United States v. Romero, 640 F.2d 1014, 1016 (9th Cir. 1986). "[T]he earnings of the human brain and hand when unaided by capital . . . are commonly dealt with as income in legislation." Stratton's Independence, Ltd. V. Howbert, 231 U.S. 399, 415 (1913).

FINDING

Taxpayer's protest is denied.

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